United Nations S/2006/558

Security Council

Distr.: General
21 July 2006

Original: English

Letter dated 20 July 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I convey herewith Uganda's brief comments on the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolutions 1653 (2006) and 1663 (2006) (S/2006/478).

The Uganda Government applauds the good report of the Secretary-General which clearly acknowledges the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) as a violent criminal group that has caused mayhem in northern Uganda and neighbouring countries. For a long time the Uganda Government has pointed out that this group is simply a terrorist group with no political agenda, but the international community was unable to recognize this.

We also hail the Secretary-General for his commendation of the efforts of the Government of Uganda to deal with the catastrophic humanitarian situation caused by the so-called Lord's Resistance Army, as reflected in the report concerning the two meetings our Minister for Foreign Affairs held with Security Council members and the creation of the Joint Monitoring Committee to handle the humanitarian situation in northern Uganda. The Uganda Government is fully committed to the implementation if the Joint Monitoring Committee mechanism. In this regard, the Government is fully convinced that the mechanism is adequate to address the humanitarian situation and issues of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration, and that there is, therefore, no need to appoint a special envoy to deal with the domestic issues in northern Uganda. As a matter of fact, the situation on the ground has changed dramatically. Camps for internally displaced persons are being decongested to small units to ensure the efficient provision of services. Many people are returning to their villages as a result of improved security. The Government has given each family 30 iron sheets to build houses and seeds and other agricultural implements to grow food. LRA has been defeated in Uganda and its remnants have sought refuge in the Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government has agreed in principle to the appointment of an envoy, whose mandate remains to be agreed upon, to coordinate the regional aspect of the LRA threat. We therefore wish to reiterate our position that the envoy, if appointed, should coordinate regional efforts to arrest and disarm LRA fighters, especially the indicted leaders.

06-43954 (E) 240706

With regard to the issue of a panel of experts to trace the sources of funding and arms for LRA, it is still our position that there is no need for a group of experts because the source of LRA arms and funding is well known. Besides, we should get our priorities right. It is well known where these rebels are, that is, in the Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They have flaunted their existence to the international community, and it is a matter of puzzlement and wonder to the ordinary people of Uganda why the United Nations cannot move to have them arrested. In our view, all efforts should be directed at arresting those people, whose whereabouts are well known, instead of embarking for now on a diversionary exercise of appointing a group of experts to trace the so-called sources of LRA weapons. It is still our belief that both the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan should have robust mandate to disarm those notorious rebels. What if the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan do not move to arrest and disarm the rebels? Would it mean that United Nations forces would stand idly by doing nothing? The United Nations would not allow Uganda to go into the Democratic Republic of the Congo to confront the rebels. We had suggested that the Security Council could authorize another country willing to do so, as was the case with the French operation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. This too has not happened.

It would appear that the task of dealing with LRA is being left largely to the Governments of the region. We feel that the United Nations should be a real partner and not just an observer. The situation in which LRA is just enjoying a holiday in the Garamba National Park as it were, regrouping and recruiting, is certainly unacceptable. The Security Council, which is primarily responsible for the maintenance of world peace and security, must be a key player in arresting those criminals.

Lastly, we would like to point out some aspects of the report that are not true. It is not correct to say that both sides to the conflict have engaged in gross abuses of human rights and continuous violations of international humanitarian law. It is well known that it is LRA which has engaged in those practices. The Government forces have not unleashed mayhem on the population. Any isolated incident of abuse has been met with a severe response. The culprit is punished, and in some cases culprits have faced death by firing squad.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Francis K. **Butagira**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative